

As we approach Christmas in this time of war, we pray for freedom and justice and peace on Earth. In his Christmas Eve address to the Nation in 1941, Franklin Roosevelt said that “Against enemies who preach the principles of hate and practice them, we set our faith in human love, and in God’s care for us and all men everywhere.” We ask for God to watch over our men and women in uniform who are serving overseas. Their families miss them, hold a seat open for them, and pray for their safe return. America’s military men and women stand for freedom, and they serve the cause of peace. Many of them are serving in distant lands tonight, but they are close to our hearts.

As an expression of our hope for peace and happiness in this Christmas season, we light the National Christmas Tree. Jackie, Melissa, and Jenna Kantor of Bethesda are

with us here. They started “Project Backpack” to give children displaced by Hurricane Katrina new backpacks filled with books and toys and school supplies. These girls are an example of the compassion that is found in the hearts and souls of Americans everywhere, and they have shown how much good can be done when we reach out to help a neighbor in need. And so Laura and I now invite them to join us to turn on the lights.

And would you help turn on these lights, as well, by counting down. Five, four, three, two, one.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:55 p.m. on the Ellipse at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to John J. Betchkal, president, Christmas Pageant of Peace; and Rev. Richard B. Martin, pastor, Church of the Nativity, Burke, VA.

Remarks on the National Economy *December 2, 2005*

Thanks to good old-fashioned American hard work and productivity, innovation, and sound economic policies of cutting taxes and restraining spending, our economy continues to gain strength and momentum.

Our economy added 215,000 jobs for the month of November. We’ve added nearly 4½ million new jobs in the last 2½ years. Third-quarter growth of this year was 4.3 percent. That’s in spite of the fact that we had hurricanes and high gasoline prices. The unemployment rate is 5 percent, and that’s lower than the average for the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.

We have every reason to be optimistic about our economic future. I mean, when you think about the news that’s come in—the jobs report, the recent report on strong economic growth, low inflation, strong productivity, lower gasoline prices, a strong housing market, increases in consumer con-

fidence and business investment—our economic horizon is as bright as it’s been in a long time.

The foundation for growth is strong. It’s based upon low taxes and restrained Government spending, legal reform, incentives for saving and investment.

The small-business sector is vibrant. Most of the new jobs in America are created by the small-business sector, and our entrepreneurs are doing well. We got the best workforce in America—in the world. People are productive; they’re hardworking. Our ingenuity and know-how and—is vibrant. This economy is in good shape.

We’re not going to rest until every American who wants a job can find one. We’re going to continue to work for good policies for our workers and our entrepreneurs. I’ll continue to push for progrowth economic

policies, all aimed at making sure every American can realize the American Dream.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:45 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the Resignation of Andrew S. Natsios as Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development *December 2, 2005*

Andrew Natsios has served as a key member of my administration for more than 4 years. He has exemplified the compassion and generosity of the American people and our deep commitment to helping and improving the lives of those who are suffering. Under his leadership, USAID has implemented important reforms and

helped us combat AIDS and malaria, rebuild Afghanistan and Iraq, provide humanitarian aid in Sudan, and assist victims of the tsunami and the recent devastating earthquake in South Asia. I thank him for his dedicated service to our country, and I wish him and his family well.

The President's Radio Address *December 3, 2005*

Good morning. Earlier this week, I visited Arizona and Texas to observe firsthand our efforts to protect our Southwest border. And I met with customs and border protection agents who are working tirelessly to enforce our laws and keep our borders secure.

Illegal immigration and border security are issues that concern Americans. We're a nation built on the rule of law, and those who enter the country illegally break the law. In communities near our border, illegal immigration strains the resources of schools, hospitals, and law enforcement. And it involves smugglers and gangs that bring crime to our neighborhoods. Faced with this serious challenge, our government's responsibility is clear: We're going to protect our borders.

Since I took office, we've increased funding for border security by 60 percent, and

our border agents have caught and sent home more than 4.5 million illegal immigrants, including more than 350,000 with criminal records. Yet we must do more to build on this progress.

This week I outlined my comprehensive strategy to reform our immigration system. The strategy begins with a three-part plan to protect our borders. First, we will promptly return every illegal entrant we catch at our border with no exceptions. For illegal immigrants from Mexico, we are working to expand an innovative program called interior repatriation, in which those caught at the border are returned to their hometowns far from the border, making it more difficult for them to attempt another crossing. For non-Mexican illegal immigrants, we're changing the unwise policy of catch-and-release to a policy of catch-